



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

cient comedy; such is the comic of Aristophanes. That which distinguishes his characters is, that they are comic in themselves, and never betake themselves wholly to acting with seriousness.

Plautus and Terence neglect this characteristic. The opposite tendency consists in this, that the comic person betakes himself to a serious end—he is merry for the sake of the spectator, not for himself. This is a more prosaic pleasantry which presents a sharp tone, and gratifies malignity of spirit. Hegel, in leaving this principle, applies it to the criticism of modern comedy, which he judges more than severely.

Moralizing upon it, he forcibly points out its abuse. It is only too true, that, frequently, in place of correcting manners by doing justice by ridicule, comedy is the school of vice and falsehood. Frequently it presents only a tissue of intrigues and delusions, directed against all that is most noble and most respectable in the world. His conclusion is that modern comedy represents private interests and personal characters, with their tricks, their absurdities, their originalities, and their fooleries; but it lacks that frank gaiety which characterizes the comedy of Aristophanes. He does not find this gaiety, this profound humor, except in the comedies of Shakspeare.

BERKELEY'S DOCTRINE ON THE NATURE OF MATTER.

By T. COLLYNS SIMON.

The whole of Berkeley's doctrine on the nature of the Material Substance and of the External Universe is contained in the single proposition, that MATTER IS A PHENOMENON, i. e. that its *Esse* is *Percipi*.

This discovery respecting the essential constitution of the Material Substance, first made by Berkeley and never afterwards abandoned by deep-thinking men, is now, under some one expression or another, part and parcel of every metaphysical system and of the convictions of every metaphysician, whether he happens to be aware that it is Berkeley's doctrine or not. Indeed many, we may even say most, of those who

hold the doctrine in foreign countries, are not aware that it is so. The hardest work of the Berkeleian advocate is often to make people aware that what they hold is Berkeley's doctrine. The tenet itself never presented any real difficulty to the metaphysician except as the disturber of something pre-conceived, and it is entirely a mistake which leads one or two writers to fancy that the doctrine, after it was once promulgated, was ever a neglected one. Such is never the fate of what is true. The ablest metaphysicians held the doctrine even before it was recognized as a discovery of science. Does it not seem frivolous to say that they abandoned it after they discovered it to be a scientific fact?

It consists of the two following propositions and results from them as its premises: (1.) Common sense teaches us that the real material world, and the real material objects in it, are those which we *immediately* see and feel around us, not the cause or causes of the things thus seen and thus felt. (2.) Physiology teaches us that what we *immediately* see and feel are phenomena—things whose *esse* is *percipi*—objects which consist entirely of certain real qualities delineated in, marked out by, and associated with, the other real qualities known as our sensations, *plus* these other qualities—these very sensations themselves; for phenomena consist not of the primary qualities alone, nor of the secondary qualities alone, but of both these classes of qualities combined into one concrete object. These are the two propositions upon which Berkeley's doctrine rests and of which it consists—a proposition of common sense and a proposition of science. They constitute what the Germans quaintly call his "*Methode*," which has however perhaps the advantage of being the briefest "*Methode*" known.

The chief opposition which the doctrine had to contend with originated in its utter overthrow of all the tenets of Materialism, from the supposed eternity of the material Universe, to the supposed real presence in the Eucharist. I do not deny that it effects this overthrow; but with such local and uncatholic objections the Metaphysician has, of course, as little to do as the Christian has. A large portion, however, of the opposition it has met with, and that, too, in quarters where one might have expected more discernment, has arisen from the strangest misapprehension of its import—misapprehension

upon several points. It may be of use to mention a few of these.

1. Some have supposed Berkeley to hold that the material Universe and all the material objects of which it is composed were located within our own bodies!—were not and could not be external to our bodies!—that the human body was not a phenomenon—that it was something of such a nature that all the rest of the material Universe could be located within it! Such a childish misapprehension as this could hardly have made a single opponent, were it not represented as their own view of phenomenal nature, as something not at all to be thought of as absurd, and as a necessary concomitant of all true philosophy, by men in such esteem as Professor von Schelling, who distinctly acknowledged that he denied this externality of the material Universe, saying seriously as Hume did jeeringly, that the popular belief in such externality was a mere prejudice of common sense, easily got over by a little philosophy. In the face of all this childishness—for that is its true name—and all this misrepresentation of the tenet that Matter is a Phenomenon, that its *esse* is *percipi*, it is but fair to Berkeley and to ourselves to repeat as often as may be necessary, that this nonsense is no part of his doctrine; that he considered the human body a phenomenon as much as he did the table or the chair, and the table or the chair as likely to have, or as capable of having, the material universe of the senses located within it as the human body is; that he considered the table and all the rest of the material Universe as locally placed outside the human body—the various objects at various distances both from our own bodies and from each other—locally placed outside the human body as completely as each of these objects is outside the other; that every phenomenon (a color, a pain, a sound, &c.) is essentially an object—essentially of an objective nature—objective to the Ego—and that whether he has devoted himself to Speculative Philosophy or not, it is only the lunatic who can suppose that the material Universe, which we can see and feel, is all within the compass of our cranium. What led such men as Schelling, and others still more to be wondered at than Schelling, into the notion that there is or can be the slightest disagreement between Common Sense and Metaphysics, and into a belief in

this most curious illustration of the disagreement, I cannot say, if it were not some necessity of their respective systems, for assuredly there is no pretext for it in the doctrine that Matter is a Phenomenon; but what led unspeculative people to impute to Berkeley this notion, that the vast universe of matter which we see and feel is something within our own bodies, seems to have been the fact that such people ordinarily hold the spirit to be something literally located within the head, combined with the other fact that when Berkeley and other writers have desired to point out that a phenomenon exists in relation to the spirit and can only so exist, they popularly express themselves by saying, not that phenomena exist "*in relation to*" the Spirit, but that they exist "*within*" it; just as they say that our ideas exist within the spirit. It must be remembered, however, that this is but figurative language. There is no "Inside" nor "Outside" whatever connected with a spirit. Nothing can, strictly speaking, be said to be locally "within" such a nature. Neither Berkeley nor any careful thinker ever meant to say it could. But if it could, and if the Spirit not only had all phenomenal nature within it, but also, at the same time, was itself within the phenomenal cranium, it would naturally follow that the material universe would be, as Schelling thought it was, within the human body instead of outside of it; and in this way, with the encouragement of a few philosophers, the unspeculative misconceived the whole of what was said.

2. Another misapprehension which has not been without its share in the manufacture of Berkeley's opponents—another distortion of the pure doctrine that Matter is a Phenomenon, by which some German writers of eminence have brought discredit on it, and thus indirectly upon the author of it, is this: It is supposed that what is immediately perceived, in any case, is part of what perceives it; that every phenomenon is a portion of the Ego, or a state of the Ego; some have even gone so far as to say, is the Ego itself—the Ego itself in one of its phases, in one of its states; that when the spirit perceives a stone it turns into a stone, or when it perceives a mountain it turns into a mountain; and so in the case of a tree, a river, &c., it is itself what it perceives. Now this is not the occasion to point out the utter want of metaphysical accuracy any more

than the utter want of common sense in all this. It is, however, but fair to Berkeley, and to the earnest student of his doctrine, to state, that there is nothing whatever of this kind in it. Berkeley does not hold that the phenomenon is the Percipient, or any portion of the Percipient, or a state of it. He holds—he states repeatedly—that it would be impossible for any two natures to differ more entirely from one another than a phenomenon does from a spirit—than that whose *esse* is *percipi* from that whose *esse* is *percipere*; that the natures are entirely heterogeneous; that we might as well speak of a sound as being a piece of a color, or a color as being a piece of a sound, as speak of these as being, either of them, the other, or a piece of the other, or a state of the other. A student who cannot understand Berkeley's doctrine, i. e. make sense of it, without attributing such grotesque conclusions to him as here alluded to, must just have the candor to say that he cannot understand it—cannot make sense of it. But why impute to him the preposterous thoughts of others, rather than to oneself a little want of discernment? Others have mixed up what is false with what is true; but why on that account oppose, why on that account misrepresent, that great and careful metaphysician?

3. Schwegler's article on Berkeley in his History of Philosophy furnishes an illustration of that entire misconception of Berkeley's doctrine, and of everything relating to it, upon the part of a highly intelligent German, which cannot fail to prove most satisfactory and gratifying to all those superficial students above alluded to, who can neither understand the doctrine (i. e. make sense of it), nor humble themselves to the confession that they cannot—whose sole result is that the doctrine is perfectly easy and perfectly wrong. Almost every passage in Schwegler's article is not only inaccurate in the extreme, but ridiculously so—such as now-a-days could only be written by a wag or a school-boy, or by one who, while he was prepared to find metaphysics entirely exempt from common sense, had (as, I doubt not, was Schwegler's case) been precluded from all opportunity of reading Berkeley's own account of the doctrine. Even from less inaccurate statements than Schwegler's, it would be impossible as well as useless to bring forward here on this occa-

sion all the misconceptions and misrepresentations which have led to the opposition that this doctrine used to encounter, and in foreign countries, chiefly in Germany, sometimes still encounters when connected with the name of its British founder. The four following, however, may be added to those already mentioned as the probable source of much hostility; but whether such misrepresentations have, in the first instance, resulted from the hostility, or the hostility from these, it is not always easy to determine. (a) Some writers say that Berkeley denies the reality of what he sees and feels, whereas that is precisely the material reality which he strenuously asserts and which these opponents as strenuously deny, endeavoring to conceal their denial even from themselves under a *double-entendre* which they have invented for the purpose, and which, strange to say, they admit to be a mere equivocation. (b) Others say that he considers a sense-phenomenon and the mere idea of one (for instance, a color and the idea of a color, a pain and the idea of a pain) to be one and the same thing; whereas he says, in the distinctest manner, that those who suppose this, do not understand what he says, and mistake the common meanings of the simple words he uses. (c) Other writers again have described him as denying that there were spirits—as asserting, either directly or indirectly, that there was nothing but phenomena (the earliest of these was Hume). (d) Others as denying that there were phenomena—that there existed anything but spirits. It is here enough to say, on both these latter points, that the imputation is entirely groundless; that it was an essential part of Berkeley's doctrine, not only that there was no other kind of nature with which we had to deal but these two, Spirits and Phenomena, but also that beyond all room for controversy there were these two totally distinct natures, the Percipient and the Non-Percipient. It is to be feared that the opposition, in these four cases, must have, at first, preceded the misconception.

The chief, indeed I may say the only, difficulty that enlightened men have at any time appeared to me to experience in connection with the doctrine that Matter is a Phenomenon, and which, on their account, is entitled here to distinct and special consideration, lies in the strange notion that phenom-

ena have only an intermittent nature; that there can be no such thing as permanence in such things as phenomena; that we have the permanence of Material Nature among the facts of consciousness, and that we must therefore seek some other interpretation of Material Nature than that it is phenomenal. Here Berkeley's opponents divide. One section of them hold that no doubt Physiology will ultimately be found to be wrong in its finding that pain, color, sound, hard things, heavy things, and all other objects of material nature, are phenomena; while the other section hold that, as there is no prospect of reversing this decree of science, we must suppose phenomena not to be the real things of material nature—that we must deny their reality, and set up the hypothesis that there *may be* (some say that there certainly *is*) something real in or behind the phenomena which perhaps produces the phenomena, although no one ever knew, nor could have known, that there really was any such thing anywhere, nor that, if there were, it could possibly produce anything, even anything unreal.

Those opponents of Berkeley who deny scientific fact,—those opponents who hope that hereafter science will discover that all which we immediately see and feel is not, as it is now known to be, phenomenal, I cannot, of course, reply to. They are not many, and they have no difficulty here which they cannot themselves best solve. But those opponents of Berkeley who accept scientific fact—who recognize honestly and frankly the phenomenal nature of the whole material universe which we see and feel, or otherwise perceive by sense, but who think that the want of permanence which they fancy they find in phenomenal nature, obliges them to deny the reality of all that is phenomenal, and to look out for some other nature more real than hard nature or heavy nature—than the nature that can be seen or can be felt—in short, than phenomena, to which other unknown kind of nature they shall impute all the missing reality, and apply all the names of phenomenal objects—all *conscientious* opponents of this class—and they are also now-a-days very few, hardly at all I may say among metaphysicians,—I earnestly exhort to attend to the two following considerations: (1) If the evil were as they suppose it, if material phenomena had not the permanence which we are

conscious our objects have, the remedy these writers propose would really be worse than the disease—reminding us of the dog in the fable, which, discontented with his substance, went in quest of something which only proved to be its shadow. They would not only deny the reality of all that we see and feel, but they would accept as a reality something which, when they arrive at it, they can neither see nor feel, nor ever under any circumstances could either see or feel, or otherwise discern, either through the senses or through the imagination; nay, something whose very reality they themselves disparage when, with suicidal absurdity, they say that it is not real enough to produce reality; that the sense-phenomena which it produces are unreal things. And, (2) Let them ask themselves with a little more strictness, whether the evil is really as they suppose it. Is it true that there is not as much permanence in Phenomena as in anything else, not only that we know of, but that we can imagine? Are not the colors in this room permanent from one day to another? Are they intermitted when we are absent? Is it common sense to say that the colors which we see around us are annihilated every time we shut our eyes? that Beethoven's music only exists when we hear it? that Homer's Iliad has not a permanent existence? and that our knowledge of algebra ceases every time we go to sleep? The *conscientious* opponent of Berkeley, upon the score of permanence, has first to determine all this. Let us endeavor to be rational, even if we cannot succeed in being speculative.

I have dwelt the less reluctantly upon this—the only point in Berkeley that I have ever found an enlightened conscientious man regarding as a difficulty—because it appears to me that the exposition of it may, for such a reader, largely contribute to the understanding of our doctrine, which however, in the case of those less acquainted with Metaphysics, can be best attained by a close study of the physiological facts connected with the question, and which may be found in any treatise on the Physiology of the Senses, but perhaps best in Dr. John Müller's admirable work in German, translated by Baly; and Müller was neither a Berkeleian nor a metaphysician.

I shall conclude these remarks by drawing the reader's

attention again to the point already alluded to, which exhibits, most clearly and briefly, the difference between Berkeley and Hegel. It is this:—Berkeley held that there is nothing whatever existing above our hemisphere of knowledge except Spirits and Phenomena; that all our objects and all our Universe, material and immaterial, consist of one or the other of these two natures; that we cannot even imagine anything of any third nature, but that we have distinctly these two totally different natures among the facts of consciousness. Hegel, on the contrary, says, No. Among the facts of consciousness we have nothing but Phenomena; there is no such thing as a Spirit or Ego, no Percipient, no Person, nothing except that action or process which we call a Phenomenon, a Thinking, or a Thought. Thus Hegel holds the whole of Berkeley's doctrine on the Nature of Matter, but only one-half of Berkeley's whole doctrine, which involves Spirits as well as Phenomena. The more important half, the earnest Hegel imitates the jeering Hume in throwing overboard. He who holds, as Hegel did, that there is nothing to be called "Spirit" but the Phenomenal, i. e. Thought, and that Matter is of that nature also, holds, *however little he may have intended to do so*, that the Spirit is of the same nature as matter—that the Spirit is material—that Matter thinks. This is Materialism, as Hume well knew; but it is not Metaphysics. And as to the Principles of the Greek Philosophy and Hegel's Bond of Being derived from them, these have their rational application in Berkeley's doctrine, not in this Identity (*Einerleiheit*) of that which thinks and of that which does not.

HEGEL'S FIRST PRINCIPLE.

(*As Introduction to the Translation of the "Science of the Comprehension."*)

It has been asserted so often by English writers that Hegel is a Pantheist, or "*Panlogist*," and that he holds that all is a relation, or that all is Pure Being (we cannot enumerate here all the absurd notions placed to his account) that no small degree of interest should attach to his own statement of his First Principle. In these outlines of the Science of the Comprehension—which are translated from the